

Dear Chairs Linehan and Anwar, Vice Chairs Welander and Bradley, Ranking Members Martin and Dauphinais, and Members of the Committee on Children,

My name is Kennedy Bennett. I am testifying to communicate my strong support for Connecticut's SB2: *An Act Concerning The Safety, Education And Social Equity Of Children In Response To The Pandemic*.

As a student, I have seen the drastic differences in education quality depending on a student's financial background and homelife. These are resources that students cannot control, and they should not be punished for their inability to afford or access educational resources.

Public and philanthropic funds have provided laptops and internet access to current students without it, but many homes in the state remain without high-speed internet ([CT Mirror](#)). For example, in Spring 2020, there were about 29,000 CT students without access to reliable WiFi and 50,000 did not have access to a device ([Hartford Courant](#)). An internet access grant program would ensure that future students can receive internet access, too.

The COVID-19 pandemic has exacerbated education inequities among low-income, Black and Hispanic students. McKinsey & Co [report](#) that—in a hybrid in-person and virtual academic year—low-income students would lose 12.4 months of learning, Black students would lose 10.3 months of learning, and Hispanic students would lose 9.2 months of learning compared to the overall average of 6.9 months of learning-lost. The effects of this pandemic will be felt for years, even after everyone has returned to in-person learning. SB2 seeks to address access to equitable education by establishing an internet access grant program. Passing this bill would be a crucial step in addressing and improving the social-emotional and educational outcomes of all students in the state.

I strongly support SB 2 and urge you to favorably vote the bill out of the Committee on Children.

Sincerely,

Kennedy Bennett